

5754-00007

Remarks:

Applicant wishes to thank the Examiner for the courtesy extended in considering outstanding issues in the present application during teleconferences on September 23 and 24, 2003. In the teleconference on September 23, 2003, the Examiner recommended amending claim 1 to incorporate the limitations of claim 2. Applicant has submitted herewith a proposed amendment to claim 1, incorporating the Examiner's suggestions. In particular, Applicant has added limitations to claim 1 directed to "opening covers" at first and second ends of the joint as set forth in claim 2. Favorable consideration of claim 1 as proposed is respectfully requested.

Applicant further proposes amending claims 3, 4, 12 and 13 to comport with the amendments to claim 1, specifically, the recitation in claim 1 of opening covers at first and second ends of the joint.

Applicant further proposes cancellation of claims 2, 15 and 16 without prejudice. The limitations of claim 2 have been incorporated into claim 1.

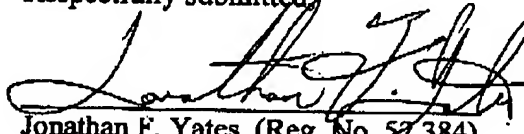
Applicant previously submitted claims 17-22, in the response to the April 10, 2003 Office Action, and they were discussed in the teleconference with the Examiner on September 24, 2003. Claims 17-22 present only subject matter which has previously been considered by the Examiner, and favorable consideration thereof is respectfully requested. In both Office Actions issued in the present case (October 22, 2002; April 10, 2003), the Examiner has indicated that claims 7-11 and 13 would be allowable if rewritten to overcome §112 problems, and to include all limitations of the base claim (claim 1) and any intervening claims. Applicant therefore previously presented independent claims 17-22, incorporating the limitations of claims 7-11 and 13, respectively, and overcoming the §112 issues.

The §112 problem identified by the Examiner related to language in claim 1 deemed indefinite. In particular, the Examiner indicated that the simultaneous use of the language "in parallel" with "sloping" was problematic. Claims 17-22 are similar to original claim 1; however, the claims differ in that they do not recite the term "in parallel." Thus, the §112 problems formerly associated with claim 1 are overcome. Claims 17-22 further recite the limitations of dependent claims 7-11 and 13, respectively, previously indicated as distinguishing the claims over the cited art.

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The present proposed amendment if for discussion purposes, however, the Examiner's consideration and approval of claims 1, 3-14, and 17-22 is courteously solicited. Applicant further respectfully requests a teleconference with the Examiner to confirm previous discussions, so that the Applicant may take steps to enter a formal response and assist in passing the subject application to issue. Accordingly, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at (248) 364-2100 at her convenience.

Respectfully submitted,



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Dated: September 24, 2003

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